



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

Department of Toxic Substances Control

T-03-00
February 11, 2000

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Certification Issued to Almaden Quicksilver County Park

Berkeley---The California Environmental Protection Agency's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) today announced the certification of hazardous waste remedial actions at the Almaden Quicksilver County Park . The work, done by the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department, addressed waste materials from mercury mining and ore processing that occurred at the site from 1845 to 1975.

DTSC's certification means that all appropriate removal and remedial actions necessary are complete and the site no longer poses a threat to public health or the environment.

The Almaden Quicksilver County Park is a 3,750 acre, undeveloped parcel on the northeast ridge of the Santa Cruz Mountains. It is Santa Clara's second largest park and is primarily used for horseback riding and hiking. The park has been designated as a historical site.

Remedial work at the site was overseen by DTSC and focused on five separate areas within the park's boundaries: the Mine Hill area, the Hacienda Furnace Yard, the Enriquita Mine Retort, the San Mateo Mine Retort, and the Senator Mine. While in operation, mercury was extracted by heating the ore in retorts and furnaces to volatilize the mercury which was then condensed to liquid mercury. Processed ore from the retorts and furnaces were dumped at the processing areas. Santa Clara County purchased the property for use as a park when mining operations ceased in 1975.

The remediation measures consisted of site containment measures such as the placement of vegetated soil covers, the placement of a 1,500 foot long rock along the bank of Alamitos Creek and the construction of wire mesh barriers. Long term maintenance of the soil covers and the constructed barrier in addition to surface monitoring is also required for the park site.

DTSC's oversight activities included reviewing and approving the remedial plan, and monitoring the fieldwork as it occurred, taking conformational samples to ensure that the work was complete.

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A number of other federal and state agencies were involved in the remedial activities. In addition to DTSC's oversight, the remedial activities were required to comply with the Clean Water Act that is administered by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Subsequent approvals and permits also had to be obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

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DTSC is one of six boards and Departments within the California Environmental Protection Agency. DTSC's mission is to protect and enhance public health and the environment by regulating the management of hazardous waste and promoting reduction.